

Press release

KENYA MAKES GREAT ADVANCES IN RESPONDING TO THE AIDS EPIDEMIC, BUT CHALLENGES REMAIN

Nairobi, Kenya, 17 January 2005 – Leaders from DFID, Norway, UNAIDS and the World Bank today praised Kenya's response to AIDS, but highlighted that more needed to be done to ensure that it meets the needs of those vulnerable to, living with and affected by HIV and AIDS.

Mr Suma Chakrabarti, Permanent Secretary, Department for International Development (DFID); Mr Bjørn Skogmo, Deputy Secretary General, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Norway; Dr Peter Piot, Executive Director of UNAIDS and Under Secretary-General of the United Nations, and Gerard Byam, Director, Operational Quality & Knowledge Services, World Bank spoke at a press conference today on their two-day mission to Kenya to strengthen the national AIDS response to the epidemic. During their visit, they met with representatives of the government, civil society and donor agencies.

They highlighted that the decline in the adult HIV prevalence rate from 13.6 percent in 1997 to 7 percent in 2004 presents many opportunities but also challenges to ensure that these hard won gains are maintained.

Opportunities include ensuring that prevention efforts targeting young people, and in particular young women, are scaled up to ensure further declines in HIV prevalence. They noted that preventing new infections remains the most cost-effective means of curbing the epidemic.

At the same time, there is an opportunity to scale up care, support and treatment interventions for the increasing numbers of people that will require this in the foreseeable future.

The challenge therefore is to ensure that prevention and treatment programmes complement one another, while also making provision for the increasing numbers of children left orphaned by the AIDS epidemic.

The leaders commended the large amounts of resources being made available by the Kenyan Government and donors to support the national AIDS response. While this presents an opportunity to scale up the national response, the challenge is to ensure that the resources are channeled to meeting the needs of those vulnerable, living with and affected by AIDS.

To make the money work they recommended that more be done to ensure a better coordination of the efforts carried out by government, donors and civil society. This can be done by strengthening the National AIDS Control Council with the appropriate resources and authority to enable it to more effectively lead the national response.

The leaders pointed out that regular reviews of the National Strategic Plan, such as the Joint AIDS Programme Review held in Nairobi in September, would ensure that the response keeps pace with the evolving nature of the epidemic. This requires that Kenya, with the support of the international community, strengthen its national monitoring and evaluation system to determine what is working, what needs to be strengthened and the effect of the cumulative response to the epidemic.

Note to the Editor:

The joint mission by the leaders of DFID, Norway, UNAIDS and the World Bank to Kenya is the result of a meeting held in 2004, in which donors committed themselves to support countries to strengthen their national responses to the AIDS epidemic. This resulted in the adoption of the “Three Ones” principles that must be applied to strengthen national AIDS responses, led by the affected countries themselves. These are:

The “Three Ones”:

- One agreed AIDS action framework that provides the basis for coordinating the work of all partners
- One national AIDS coordinating authority with a broad-based multisectoral mandate
- One agreed country level monitoring and evaluation system

The mission to Kenya by the organizations is one of several country missions planned to take place during 2005, during which they will engage with countries on the strengthening of their national responses to the epidemic. Following the mission to Kenya, they will travel to Uganda from 18-19 January.

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